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ABSTRACT

Projects funded in 1993 as part of the Field-Initiated Studies program of the U.S. Department of Education are described, including information on research objective, project design, principal investigators, amount of award, and report availability. Program titles and locations of principal investigator are: "Promoting Equity in Teacher Education within a School-University Partnership," Northern Arizona University; "High-Achieving Classrooms for Minority Students," University of Colorado at Denver; "The Development, Implementation, and Effects of Nongraded Primary Schools," University of Louisville (Kentucky); "Alternatives to Tracking in High Schools," Johns Hopkins University (Maryland); "School Outcomes for High-Risk Children," University of Minnesota; "Migrant Farmworker Students," Livingston-Steuben-Wyoming BOCES (New York); "A Study of Parent Involvement in Montana Schools," Montana State University; "Empowering Local Educational Communities," Center on Values, Education, and the Law (New York); "An Investigation of the Influences of School, Family, and Personal Factors on Academic Achievement of Aspiring Minority Youth in a Scholarship Incentive Program," University of Toledo (Ohio); "A Study of Private and Public School Choice in San Antonio," University of North Texas; and "Improving the Success Rate of Adapting Technology for the Classroom," University of Massachusetts. (MES)

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Field Initiated Studies Program

Abstracts of Funded Projects 1993

Spring 1994

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For more information

The Field-Initiated Studies (FIS) program is open to institutions of higher education; public and private organizations, institutions, and agencies; as well as individuals. Applicants may propose projects that last up to 18 months. Proposals are reviewed and evaluated based on their technical quality and national importance by scholars and practitioners from outside the federal government. The time from announcement to award is typically 8 to 10 months.

An announcement in the *Federal Register* lets the public know whether the program will operate in the upcoming fiscal year, when application packages will be available, and when applications are due. In the past, the *Federal Register* announcement has appeared in the fall as part of the U.S. Department of Education's general notice inviting applications for a variety of programs.

The Field-Initiated Studies program has accepted proposals and made grant awards on an annual cycle. Please note this is subject to change at any time. This description is provided for general information only.

For more information about the Field-Initiated Studies program or to be included on the mailing list, please contact:

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Field Initiated Studies Program

Abstracts of Funded Projects
1993

Spring 1994

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U.S. Department of Education
Richard W. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Sharon P. Robinson
Assistant Secretary

Office of Research
Joseph C. Conaty
Acting Director

Spring 1994

Foreword

The Field-Initiated Studies program is an integral part of the Office of Research. It is a source of new directions and fresh ideas.

This booklet contains descriptions of projects funded in 1993. As you will readily see, the topics and research methodologies are diverse. From a project that examines the effects of nongraded primary schools to another that is looking at parental involvement, the program displays education research as a vibrant enterprise.

The Office of Research is vitally interested in the scope and potential of the research that comes directly from researchers and educators across the country. Research is a critical element in national systemic reform efforts. While less than 10 percent of the proposals received are funded, many more deserve support.

You are invited to contact the principal investigators directly to discuss their projects and findings. The Field-Initiated Studies program has put increasing emphasis on the dissemination of research findings. Principal investigators are expected to make their findings available in useful forms to audiences who can put them into practice. We know education research is an important part of school improvement efforts.

My thanks and appreciation are extended to all the educators whose good ideas make this program possible and the many Office of Research staff who contribute to the success of this program. Through all these efforts, the research ideas become a reality.

Joseph Conaty
Acting Director
Office of Research
Office of Educational Research and Improvement

Promoting Equity in Teacher Education Within a School–University Partnership

Research Objective

The purpose of this project is to improve a school-based teacher education program to better prepare elementary and early childhood educators to work productively and equitably with all students, regardless of sex or ethnicity and to recruit and prepare qualified minority teacher candidates, particularly from the Navajo and Hopi Nations and Latino communities.

Project Design

Northern Arizona University and two large, ethnically diverse elementary schools in the Flagstaff School District operate a partnership to prepare preservice teachers. The existing two-semester, school-based program will be revised to include content and experiences that promote fair and equitable treatment of all learners, regardless of sex or ethnicity. The new program will include trips to urban and rural schools, reservation schools, and bilingual programs; seminars and workshops on equity issues related to sex and ethnicity; study of Native American and Latino cultures; examination of educational stereotypes that affect equity; and study of children's literature that can be used to promote equity.

The program also will recruit, support, and prepare well-qualified minority teachers. Minority graduates of the teacher education program will help recruit new applicants through one-to-one contacts, newsletters, flyers, and letters.

The teacher education program will be field-tested and assessed to determine its effectiveness in helping preservice teachers make equitable decisions about management, discipline, and communication and to select strategies and materials appropriate for diverse learners. The 50 preservice teachers in the program will be evaluated through observation, analysis of videotaped lessons, questionnaires, and interviews. Also, children's attitudes about sex and ethnic differences will be surveyed.

Principal Investigators

Peggy Ver Velde and Ward Cockrum
Northern Arizona University
Center for Excellence in Education
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
602–523–2198

Award

$83,727 *Grant Number* R117E30009

Report Available

Final report is expected to be under development in spring 1995.

High-Achieving Classrooms for Minority Students

Research Objective

This study will examine how eight teachers in urban elementary classrooms with at least 50 percent minority enrollment have achieved unusual success in improving students' reading and writing skills and their attitudes toward language.

Project Design

The study will focus on how effective teachers address three fundamental issues in literacy instruction: creating social contexts for learning; tailoring learning activities to individual students' linguistic and cultural differences and differences in academic skills; and creating an environment in which students and teachers share the same perspective on literacy and learning.

The eight teachers were selected based on a study of 39 urban classrooms in 10 schools. These teachers' minority students scored highest on the ITBS Reading Comprehension Test, the ITBS Language Test, a test of retelling, narrative and persuasive writing samples, and reading and writing attitude surveys. Their classrooms showed high rates of student engagement, positive rapport, and emphasis on higher order tasks involving extended text.

This study will entail four data collection cycles with interim data analyses during each phase to shape subsequent phases. Data will be collected through extended classroom observations, videotapes, think-aloud protocols, interviews with students, home visits and interviews with parents, and portfolios of student work.

Principal Investigators

Mark Clarke, Alan Davis, and Lynn Rhodes
University of Colorado at Denver
School of Education
Campus Box 106
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Denver, CO 80217–3364
303–556–2842

Award

$91,265 *Grant Number* R117E30244

Report Available

Final report is expected to be under development in summer 1995.

The Development, Implementation, and Effects of Nongraded Primary Schools

Research Objective

This study will investigate the development, use, and effects of multi-age, nongraded primary schools mandated by the Kentucky Education Reform Act in terms of how teachers make decisions, what resources they use, classroom academic instruction, and student learning.

Project Design

This study focuses on the implementation of nongraded primary programs for children aged 5 to 9 as required by the 1991 Kentucky Education Reform Act. Three key issues will be examined: how districts, schools, and classrooms restructure traditional graded classrooms to nongraded primary classrooms; how academic instruction occurs in these classrooms and how students respond to it; and which models, characteristics, or policies best support student success.

The study sample includes four schools with urban, rural, and suburban populations in three school districts in Kentucky. Teachers, classrooms, and schools will be observed over an 18-month period with 36 visits scheduled for each school. Instructional materials and plans will be collected, examined, and used as guides for three interviews with each teacher to be conducted over the 18-months. Portfolios of the 140 to 200 children in participating classrooms will be duplicated and examined three times across the study to examine their academic growth.

Principal Investigators

Ellen McIntyre and Diane Kyle
University of Louisville
Department of Early and Middle Childhood Education
Louisville, KY 40292
502–588–0576 or 502–588–0572

Award $88,118 *Grant Number* R117E30115

Report Available

Final report is expected to be under development in summer 1995.

Alternatives to Tracking in High Schools: National Descriptions and Effects

Research Objective

This project will examine effects of and alternatives to tracking—defined as assigning students to different learning groups based on assessments of their previous academic progress—in American schools.

Project Design

The project will explore alternatives to tracking, including program tracking (college preparatory, general, and vocational) and course tracking within program; limited or partial course tracking (mixed-ability grouping in all subjects except mathematics, English, or both); flexible course tracking, which permits high- and low-level placements for the same student to match individual strengths; and optional tracking or no tracking with in-class supports such as diverse materials, incentive systems, extra help, and cooperative learning techniques.

Within each tracking alternative, researchers will study the curriculum opportunities to learn, the interpersonal environments, and student perceptions of school and their future chances. They will examine National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS: 88) data on more than 18,000 1990 10th-grade students to evaluate the effects of alternative tracking on student educational aspirations, academic satisfaction, and self-confidence in specific subjects and in general; and academic behaviors such as grades, test scores, and teacher ratings in specific subjects.

Principal Investigators

Edward McDill, James McPartland, and Will Jordan
Johns Hopkins University
Center for Social Organization of Schools
3305 North Charles Street
Baltimore, MD 21218
410–516–0370

Award

$84,756 *Grant Number* R117E30089

Report Available

Two reports are expected to be delivered—one in June 1994 and one in December 1994.

School Outcomes for High-Risk Children: Pathways of Success and Failure

Research Objective

This study involves analyzing longitudinal data to develop a "high-risk" index to help predict which students will drop out of school and develop ways to help steer those students away from school failure.

Project Design

The study will use longitudinal data collected on 180 students from before their birth in 1975 to the present to identify factors that predict high school academic failure, including dropping out. The subjects were drawn from a population at risk for developmental and educational problems (low socioeconomic status; often young, mostly single mothers; 50 percent non-high-school graduates). Their developmental history, quality of attachment with their mothers, and family environment have been studied extensively over the years.

Data will be collected and analyzed from school performance, including school grades, class rank, test scores, retentions, and dropping out; school attitudes and motivation, as evidenced in interviews with students' English teachers and with the students themselves; school adjustment, including data on attendance, truancy, and special education involvement from school records; interviews with school personnel; and teacher rankings of school adjustment in social and academic domains; and behavior problems in school, as noted on the Child Behavior Checklist and from histories of discipline problems.

In particular, differences in outcomes between students who were retained or received special education services and those who did not will be explored. Based on this data, the investigators will generate an early profile of those at risk for later school failure and dropping out. The investigators will assess factors that protect children from early academic failure and those that deflect children from the pathway of failure once it has begun.

Principal Investigators

Byron Egeland and Alan Sroufe
University of Minnesota
Institute of Child Development
51 East River Road
Minneapolis, MN 55455
612–624–5273

Award

$106,753 *Grant Number* R117E30249

Report Available

Final report is expected to be under development in fall 1994.

Migrant Farmworker Students: Decisions Involved in Postsecondary Participation and Success

Research Objective

This study will investigate factors influencing migrant youth's participation and success in postsecondary education and develop materials to encourage migrant students and their parents to pursue college options.

Project Design

The research will include survey, analysis, and dissemination. First, a questionnaire will be mailed to the 420 students who have received scholarships in the past 6 years from the Mattera Fund, a national scholarship fund for migrant farmworkers and their children. The questionnaire will address demographic issues such as ethnic, economic, and migrant farmworker background as well as family structure and education issues, including the student's first language, high school rank and curriculum track, college choice, type of degree sought, academic performance and support, grades and class standing, role models, means of paying for education, and reasons for staying in or dropping out of college.

Second, a sample of 25 to 30 migrant students from the estimated 250 respondents will be selected for interviews. These students will be asked to discuss how they selected colleges and academic programs, what problems or obstacles they faced, what resources they drew on, and how satisfied they are with their higher education choices.

Survey and interview data will then be analyzed for correlations between the variables and successful postsecondary experiences. Third, Spanish and English brochures will be developed to encourage migrant youth and their parents to pursue postsecondary education. The brochures will be disseminated to 250 key migrant agencies.

Principal Investigator

Robert Lynch
BOCES Geneseo Migrant Center
Livingston–Steuben–Wyoming BOCES
Holcolmb Building, Room 210
Geneseo, NY 14454
716–245–5681

Award

$70,529 *Grant Number* R117E30222

Report Available

Report is expected to be under development in winter 1995.

A Study of Parent Involvement in Montana Schools

Research Objective

Parents, teachers, and school administrators in Montana will be studied to determine their views on the status of and need for parent involvement in education. Study results will be used to develop recommendations for state and local policymakers to strengthen, increase, and support parent and community involvement.

Project Design

This study will explore parent involvement in a largely rural state with a sizable Native American population through descriptive survey research using quantitative and qualitative data. First, 1,000 parents of school-aged children, 750 classroom teachers, and 250 school administrators will be sent questionnaires adapted from a set developed by the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children's Learning.

The questions will focus on the current level of parent involvement, the desired level, and the barriers to achieving it. Differences in perception between parents and school personnel will be noted, as will such factors as parents' income level and education background and teachers' subject area and experience level.

Follow-up telephone interviews will be conducted with 50 parents, 37 teachers, and 13 administrators to provide a more indepth exploration of parent involvement, particularly barriers to it and ways these barriers might be alleviated. After data have been analyzed, a group of administrators, policymakers, teachers, and parents will review the results and recommend policy development and action.

Principal Investigator

Gloria Gregg
Center for Community–School Development and Field Service
Montana State University
250 Reid Hall
Bozeman, MT 59717
406–994–6984

Award

$65,812 *Grant Number* R117E30258

Report Available

Report is expected to be under development in spring 1995.

Empowering Local Educational Communities: A New Approach to Judicial Remedies in Education Law Litigations

Research Objective

This research will support two case studies of state and federal court decisions related to current and significant education policy issues and propose a model to help courts and communities resolve the controversial issues behind the court decisions.

Project Design

Educators, parents, and students look to the courts for resolution of highly charged community controversies involving conflicting rights, expecting judges to make principled decisions that will do what the schools and communities have not: achieve a consensus about policies and values. Judges, however, do not impose their concepts of education policy but rely on solutions devised by school boards or negotiated during litigation, often leading to partial solutions that uphold one side's position.

In this project, the case study method will be used to examine the courts' remedial authority and determine how it can be used to promote long-lasting solutions to important educational controversies. After two case studies, the investigators will develop a proposal that describes how court decrees can aid communities in decision making, how judicial intervention should be evaluated, and when it should end. They will conduct a review of all recent federal litigations in which court decrees have used communal decision-making models as well as gather information on alternative dispute resolution and community participation issues. School board members, parents, judges, and educators will be invited to critique this document at a national seminar and group meetings. Findings will be published in scholarly articles and presented at major conferences, state and national school board associations, and parents' organizations.

Principal Investigator

Michael A. Rebell
Center on Values, Education, and the Law
260 Madison Avenue, 18th Floor
New York, NY 10016
212–213–1007

Award

$93,240 *Grant Number* R117E30052

Report Available

Report is expected to be under development in winter 1995.

An Investigation of the Influences of School, Family, and Personal Factors on Academic Achievement of Aspiring Minority Youth in a Scholarship Incentive Program

Research Objective

This study will evaluate a Toledo-based scholarship incentive program for minority students to determine what kinds of students benefit most from this type of program and what influences school, family, and personal factors have on student achievement.

Project Design

Toledo EXCEL is a scholarship incentive program for high-achieving, urban African-, Asian-, Hispanic-, and Native Americans. Fifty eighth-graders are enrolled each year with parental participation and commitment. Students attend annual 2-week summer institutes and six weekend seminars per year throughout high school and are awarded University of Toledo scholarships for tuition, fees, and books upon graduation.

This study will analyze the effects of a creative, experiential enrichment program that involves extensive writing, field trips, and cross-cultural contact. The 1990 cohort and a control group were stratified according to achievement level, sex, and ethnicity. Program effectiveness will be evaluated through quantitative measures such as students' grades, absences, and frequency of dropping out. Students also will complete a questionnaire designed to find out whether EXCEL affects self-esteem, use of learning strategies, psychological adjustment, and perceptions of opportunity. To analyze the effects of selection criteria, questionnaire data will be analyzed for treatment, prior achievement, and interaction. The study also will include a qualitative component involving interviews and observations of EXCEL parents and students to find out why students who were equally high achieving as eighth-graders have different academic outcomes as seniors.

Principal Investigators

David Bergin and Helen Cooks
University of Toledo
2801 West Bancroft
Toledo, OH 43606
419–537–2478 or 419–537–5033

Award $93,043 *Grant Number* R117E30184

Report Available

Report is expected to be under development in spring 1995.

A Study of Private and Public School Choice in San Antonio

Research Objective

This study will explore factors that lead parents to enroll their children in private and public schools; the impact of school choice on participating students' educational achievement, behavior, and satisfaction and their families' school involvement; and the impact of school choice on those remaining in neighborhood schools.

Project Design

Research will be conducted in San Antonio, Texas, where in 1991, 18 percent of low-income students attended private schools and 2 percent attended the district's multilingual choice program. In 1992, the Children's Educational Opportunity Foundation increased private school availability by providing partial scholarships of up to $750 to more than 900 low-income children, mostly Hispanic. Comparisons will be drawn among six groups of low-income students and their families: those who remained in neighborhood public schools; enrolled in a public school multilingual choice program; chose the public school choice program but were turned down due to insufficient space; enrolled in a private school with the help of scholarships; enrolled in a private school without a scholarship; and were awarded a scholarship but did not enroll.

The study also will examine how the price of private schooling affects its use by low-income students through analyses of who applies to private schools with and without scholarships, who chooses to enroll, and who drops out and returns to public schools.

Data will be collected on student's socioeconomic and demographic characteristics; changes in attitudes, behavior, and achievement on standardized tests over an 18-month period; and changes in family participation and satisfaction. Questionnaires will be mailed to all families in June 1994 and 1995 to track changes in demographics, attitudes, and parent satisfaction and involvement. Families applying for choice programs in January 1994 and 1995 also will complete a mailed survey.

Principal Investigators

Kenneth Godwin, Frank Kemerer, and Valerie Martinez
University of North Texas
PO Box 5396
Denton, TX 76203-5396
817-565-2276

Award $88,640 *Grant Number* R117E30059

Report Available

Report is expected to be under development by spring 1995.

Improving the Success Rate of Adapting Technology for the Classroom

Research Objective

This study will develop and disseminate a plan to help teachers, administrators, university researchers, and corporations work together effectively to introduce technology in the classroom.

Project Design

First, researchers will study two technology programs to develop a general methodology for introducing computer technologies—Editorial System in the Classroom (1991) and Revitalizing High School Computer Science (1991).

In both projects, teachers shared classroom scenarios with researchers who in turn translated this information to engineers who customized hardware and software. Researchers will survey and interview teachers, administrators, corporate donors, students, and university personnel involved. Second, researchers will use this data to develop guidelines and documents for the major players. The methodology will cover design issues, obligations, effective procedures, pitfalls, and communication strategies. Researchers then will test the methodology's effectiveness by applying it to a new project customizing hardware and software for an innovative inner-city school mathematics program.

Finally, researchers will revise the methodology based on observations, surveys, and interviews with participants and create a guidebook on using technology from the standpoints of teachers, administrators, researchers, and industry representatives.

Principal Investigators

Marian Williams and James T. Canning
Center for Productivity Enhancement
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Lowell, MA 01854
508–934–2630

Award $76,773 *Grant Number* R117E30237

Report Available

Guidebook expected to be under development in fall 1994.

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